

Farm Restrooms

If you have employees, OSHA mandates they have access to a restroom. In the old days, hired hands used the bathroom in the farmhouse. Some of you still allow this, which is great. For others, the size of your farm and workforce have grown, but restrooms may not be as available as they once were.

OSHA requires one unisex bathroom with a toilet, locking door, sink with hot and cold water, soap, and towels for any employer with 15 or fewer employees. For 16–35 employees, there need to be two bathrooms available. As long as they are one-toilet rooms with locking doors, they do not need to be designated by gender. For agricultural workers, a restroom must be available within a quarter mile of the work site and employees must have “reasonable” and “prompt” access to this restroom.

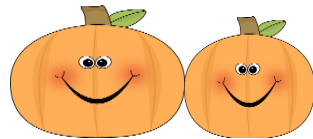
If you have a restroom available for your employees, it will make your farm more attractive to them and relieve you of a problem you may not know you have. If your restroom is hard to get to or employees are not given reasonable opportunities to use it, they may be forced to get creative. I have heard of latrine areas behind dumpsters, in storage and silo rooms, and in upstairs hay mows. If you have employees, they are going to the bathroom *somewhere!*



VFD or Veterinary Feed Directives are coming up for renewal the first of the year. This is a veterinary prescription for putting antibiotics in feed. The law gives the veterinarian no leeway at all on dosage. The law specifies the drug and species that the drug is being fed to. There are random inspections from the FDA and our practice has already been involved in one. The producer has to keep records of the VFD for two years. Some of you will be inspected. To purchase antibiotics to treat water for honey bees requires a VFD. Dr. Monty is our go-to honey bee VFD person.

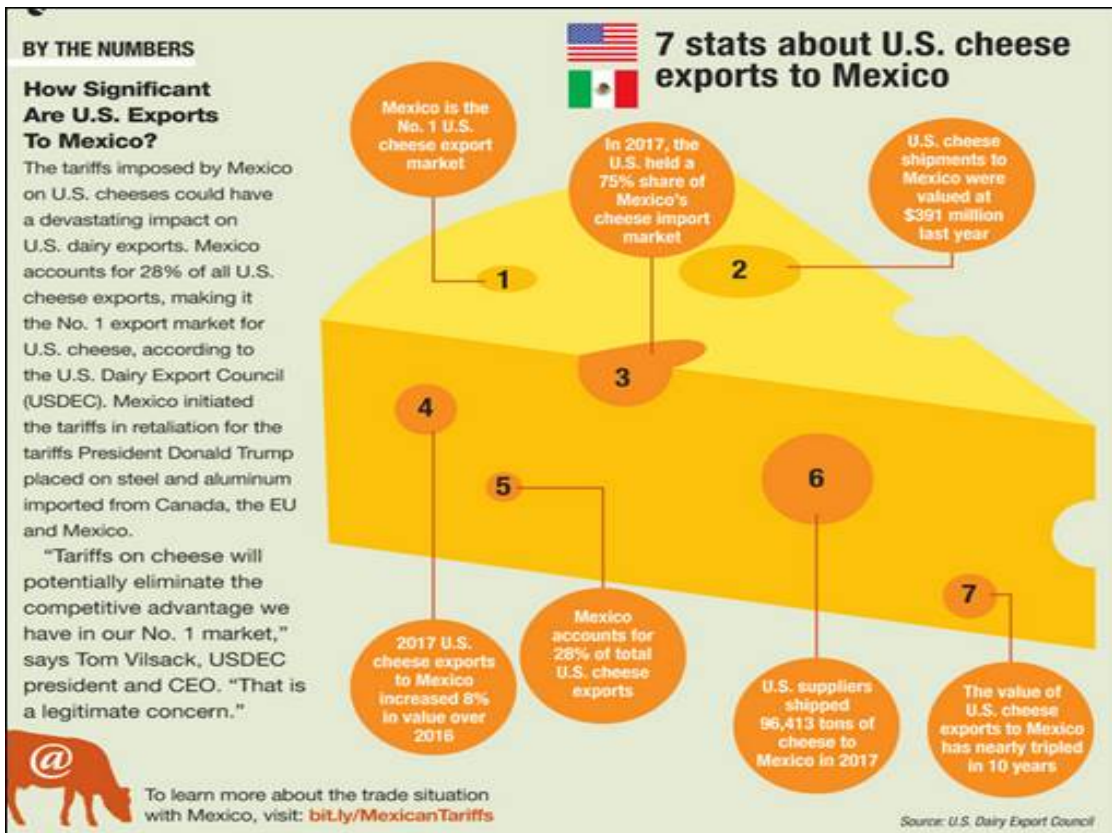
Thoughts on Labeling:

Non-GMO is the new labeling fad that the FDA is allowing on products produced with corn and soybeans that have no genes inserted into the plants. The interesting note is they are also allowing the label on products in which there are no products with GMOs available. The Non-GMO label is on tomatoes and orange juice, but there is no such thing as genetically modified tomato or orange...anywhere. This is an absence claim that confuses the consumer. We can put Non-GMO on all our milk and cheese and yogurt. We can put it on beef and pork and chicken. Perhaps we should also put that there is no arsenic and no strychnine in our products as well. We can fill up pages of health claims with every perceived toxic product and claim our products don't have them, it's evidently legal. Claiming an absence in a product of a substance or gene that is perceived to be unhealthy with no science to show it is unhealthy is a slippery slope. If the science shows a blanket health risk then the product should be banned. Taken to an extreme, Ford could claim their cars are made with no asbestos, implying that other cars are, which is ludicrous, but evidently legal.



Buckthorn:

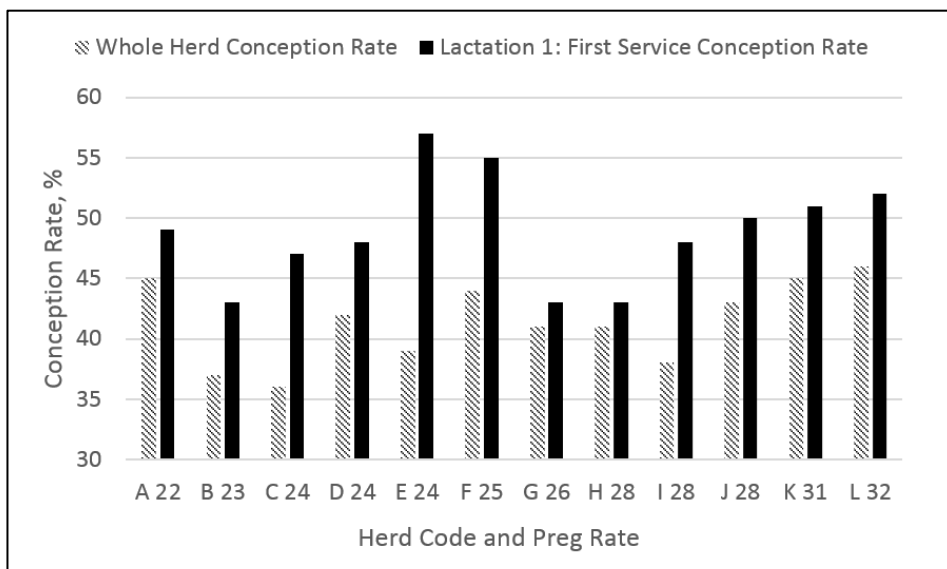
You probably don't pay much attention to this brushy plant brought into the US years ago but it is taking over woodlots and fencerows everywhere. It produces a black berry that you can see on the bush during the winter. I've been personally trying to kill it in my woods for several years and succeeding. An interesting note from the Wisconsin Agriculturist is that this scrubby tree is responsible for the overwintering of soybean aphids, and evidence suggests aphid infestations are much higher in fields with adjacent buckthorn. We keep bringing in plants from other countries and we get all kinds of long term problems.



Dairy isn't alone in getting killed with tariffs. Kidney beans are piling up, cranberries are being hit because Paul Ryan is from the number one cranberry producing state. It's easy to pick on agriculture because we export so much food.

In the August newsletter, we benchmarked milk quality data. This month we are benchmarking pregnancy rates and conception rates from 12 well-managed herds in our practice. The farms represented know which letter represents their farm. Contact Kolby before October 20th if you want to be included in milk quality benchmarking for the November newsletter.

On the graph below, pregnancy rate increases as you move from left to right. The 12-month conception rate for each herd is represented by the striped bars, and the first-service conception rate for first-lactation animals is represented by the solid bars. Four out of the five best farms for first-lactation first-service conception rate use G6G. Presynch, Double Ovsynch, and MTB(Modified Time Breeding) are also represented on the graph. In addition to your reproductive protocol, cow comfort, hygiene, and nutrition play important roles in reproductive success.



Farm A and Farm L have similar conception rates, but Farm L has a preg rate 10% higher than Farm A. Preg rate is calculated by multiplying conception rate by heat detection rate. These two farms must vary significantly in the number of animals that are bred during each 21 day cycle. In addition to preg rate, it is important to monitor services per conception, percent of your herd that is pregnant, calving interval, and average days in milk for each lactation group. This will give you a more complete picture of how well your repro program is working.